

WATER ALLIANCES FOR VOLUNTARY EFFICIENCY (WAVE)

Introduction

The Water Alliances for Voluntary Efficiency (WAVE) program was established by EPA's Office of Water in December 1992, following the success of other EPA voluntary programs such as Green Lights. WAVE's mission is to "encourage commercial businesses and institutions to reduce water consumption while increasing efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness." WAVE encourages water use efficiency by providing education on water conservation along with marketing support and use of the WAVE logo. The program currently targets the lodging industry, whose widespread public exposure provides an effective medium for educating the public on water conservation issues. WAVE expects to expand its focus by early 1998 to include office buildings, schools, and universities.

Program Summary

WAVE is funded and administered by EPA's Office of Water and provides its membership services free of charge. WAVE membership is divided into three categories: Partners, Supporters, and Endorsers. Any US commercial business interested in water conservation is eligible to become a WAVE Partner, although, as mentioned above, the program currently targets the lodging industry. Water service companies, equipment suppliers and manufacturers, government agencies, and utility companies are eligible to become WAVE Supporters. Finally, environmental groups and trade associations are eligible to become WAVE Endorsers.

WAVE Partners are primarily targeted to increase their water use efficiency. The WAVE Partnership consists of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EPA and the participating lodging establishment. The MOU commits the business to water efficiency practices in exchange for technical assistance, publicity, and use of the EPA and WAVE logo. There are currently 750 hotels, owned by 33 companies, participating in WAVE.

Specifically, the MOU requires that WAVE Partners appoint a WAVE Implementation Manager for their hotel or chain. They must survey their current water use devices and practices, and implement more efficient water use techniques. Partners, however, are not expected to undertake activities that will have an unreasonable impact on profitability. In addition, Partners agree to upgrade water devices to achieve 90 percent of projected water use reductions within five years of enrollment, and to use water-efficient devices in any new construction projects. To assist with these activities, WAVE provides member hotels with WAVE Saver, a software package that allows Partners to track water use, evaluate efficiency options, and choose the most economical alternatives for water use efficiency at their hotel. WAVE Saver allows hotels to enter their own property data (e.g., the number of rooms, size of the facility, etc.) to calculate the unit cost of water usage, then estimates annual water costs based on historical occupancy patterns. These data are used to highlight water-efficiency options and analyze the benefits of water-efficient equipment

upgrades. Program data and any progress toward water use efficiency must be reported to the EPA.

WAVE claims that instituting more efficient water use practices can reduce hotel water use by up to 30 percent. To accomplish such reductions, WAVE often examines plumbing fixtures, cooling systems, kitchens, laundries and landscaping. The WAVE Saver program allows hotels to customize water conservation measures to the unique nature of each property, location, and clientele. EPA also provides technical support through training, workshops, and a nationwide member help-line. By giving hotels the ability to identify for themselves the best water-efficiency options, WAVE encourages creativity and independent decision-making in water conservation.

In order to fulfill the educational component of the program's motivations, Partners must educate both customers and employees about the benefits of water use efficiency. A designated WAVE Partner liaison at EPA supplies WAVE outreach materials for this purpose. WAVE promotes Partners through public service magazine advertisements commending Partners' commitment to water conservation. WAVE gives Partners the right to use EPA and WAVE logos on stationary, advertisements, and displays. While the MOU sets limitations on the use of these logos, however, there is no formal mechanism for ensuring compliance with all of the conditions agreed to in the MOU,

Both hotel chains and individual franchises are eligible for WAVE Partnership, although, as mentioned above, the program plans to expand its focus in the near future. Because the WAVE Saver software is more suitable to larger hotels (more than 100 rooms), most of the current membership consists of larger hotel chains; however, some small, individual hotels have become WAVE Partners as well.

WAVE Supporters consist of resource-conscious organizations that can help commercial businesses become more efficient, such as water service companies, equipment suppliers or manufacturers, government agencies, and water and wastewater utilities. Supporters promote water efficiency especially within industry, help to publicize WAVE, recruit Partners, and work with EPA to improve the market infrastructure for water-efficient equipment. EPA works with Supporters by providing WAVE outreach and training materials and by establishing an information-sharing network for Supporters. WAVE Supporters also receive the WAVE Saver computer program to help them survey and upgrade their water use facilities, and may use the WAVE logo in promotional materials.

WAVE Endorsers are organizations like Green Seal and the American Hotel & Motel Association, that simply support the WAVE concept and pledge to help EPA promote water conservation practices. These organizations may also use the WAVE logo in promotional materials.

Program Methodology

The WAVE program bases the selection of its product categories on environmental impacts. Currently working with the hospitality industry, WAVE targets commercial businesses and institutions whose widespread public exposure provides an effective medium for educating the public on water conservation issues. WAVE membership is open to all interested hotels and includes automatic program certification. Members must abide by the terms of the MOU signed by WAVE and the member institution, which requires that members consider their recycling, reuse, maintenance, and product use patterns. WAVE reviews information from other environmental programs and member businesses, as well as relevant literature, in targeting business sectors and setting the standards for its MOUs.

References

Auer, Joy. "Cutting Back on Profit Leaks." *Lodging* May 1995.

EPA Office of Water. *Introducing WAVE- Water Alliances for Voluntary Efficiency*. September 1994.

Flowers, John. WAVE Program Director, US EPA. Personal communication with Abt Associates, Summer 1997.

Martin, Valerie. WAVE Program, US EPA. Personal communication with Abt Associates, Summer 1997.

Product Categories

- Lodging establishments
- Water-service companies
- Water or wastewater utilities
- Energy utilities
- Equipment manufacturers or suppliers
- Consulting firms
- State governments
- Municipalities
- Hotel franchisers
- Environmental groups
- Trade associations

